

Senator Randy Gardner

“Protect and Promote Lake Erie”

Monday, August 18, 2014

The following is a statement from State Senator Randy Gardner, founder and co-chairman of the Lake Erie Caucus who represents more Lake Erie shoreline than any other member of the Ohio Senate. He represents the 2nd Senate District, which includes the Lake Erie counties of Lucas, Ottawa and Erie. He visited the Ottawa County communities of Port Clinton, Catawba Island Township and Marblehead on Monday and is scheduled to visit the cities of Vermilion, Huron and Sandusky on Tuesday to hand-deliver the following message to community leaders:

Over the past three years, I have been especially engaged in efforts to help heal our great natural asset, Lake Erie. New programs like the Healthy Lake Erie Fund to help with agricultural best practices to reduce nutrient runoff and Ohio’s first-ever fund to begin to reduce open lake dumping of dredge materials is going to make a difference.

Unfortunately, what transpired in Toledo on August 2 generated the kind of national news and attention that hurts our region. But immediately afterward, local and state officials began working together even harder. On Thursday, August 14, the directors of the Ohio EPA, Department of Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture announced new action steps that will help our communities and our lake: Direct support for local water treatment plants, additional support to reduce phosphorus runoff into the lake and funds to conduct research on toxic algae to help keep our drinking water supply safe.

There is more yet to do, and the federal government and the U.S. EPA must also come to the table to help. This is only fair since some of the contributions to the Lake Erie algae problem are coming from Indiana and Michigan. Additional announcements are expected in the days and weeks ahead.

Last Friday, at a public forum, a Toledo legislator declared Lake Erie dead. “Lake Erie is on a death knell”, she said.. The phrase death knell means the “ringing of a bell to announce a death.” I strongly disagree. While we have a lot of work to do to restore Lake Erie to good health, our lake is not dead. In fact, last Friday the algal bloom covered no more than 20% of the Western Lake Erie Basin and only about 3% of the entire lake.

Here’s what I said at that forum in response to that reckless charge: ***“With all due respect, Lake Erie is not on a death knell. Lake Erie remains a great place to be. Great communities to live in. And a great place for families to visit.”***

I will continue to do more to push for strong action to help heal our lake. I know more needs to be done. But I will not allow the small businesses and the communities that I represent in the Ohio Senate to be impacted by words that only serve to discourage people from wanting to live here, visit here and create jobs here.

The bottom line: Let’s fight to **protect** Lake Erie and **promote** what is great about Lake Erie.